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DECISIONS

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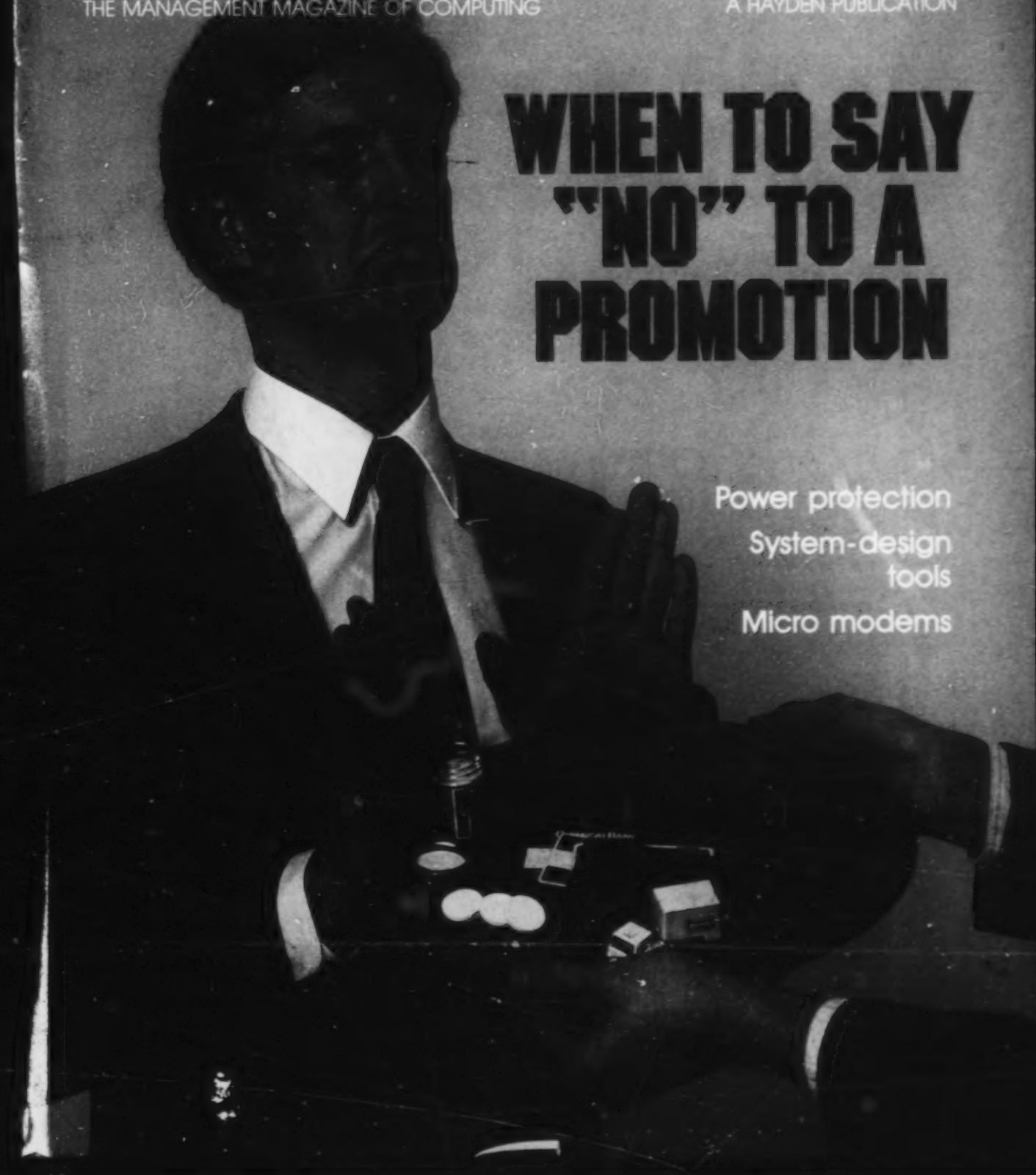
A HAYDEN PUBLICATION

WHEN TO SAY "NO" TO A PROMOTION

Power protection

System-design
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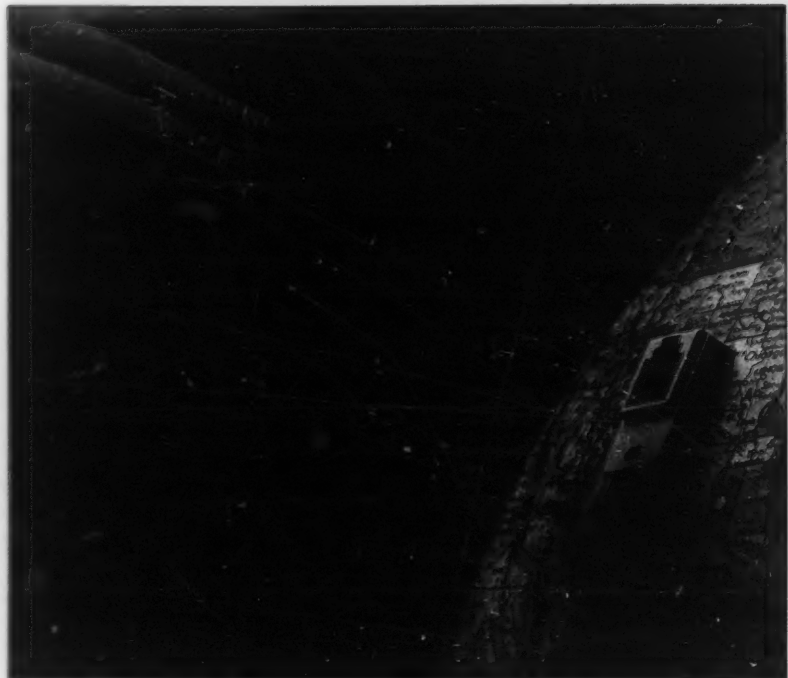
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OFFICE AUTOMATION

by Jennifer E. Beaver, Office Automation Editor



Data General's new Eclipse MV/4000 DC minisystem helps users meet departmental-computing needs.

MINIS REACH MIDDLE GROUND

A "mini in every department" may soon be the battle cry heard throughout corporate offices. Not many voices are making this demand yet, but discussion about departmental office-automation systems—and what they should and shouldn't be—is growing.

Minicomputers are most often cited as the ideal departmental systems, but not because of their size. Michael Hammer, a Cambridge, MA-based consultant, notes that size and computing power are becoming irrelevant in many cases. The IBM PC AT, for example, is a high-speed personal computer rated at .75 million instructions per second, packing 3 megabytes (Mbytes) of memory and 42 Mbytes of disk storage. "In my day, we didn't call a machine like that a personal computer," says Hammer. "We called it a data center and ran the whole company on it."

The mini's merit in the office is based less on computer power than on computing capability. The mini-based office

system has increased its stature for two reasons: First, hybrid software is now available that combines general OA tools with specific business applications. Second, communication methods are available to link the department's mini to each employee's workstation and to the corporation's mainframe.

At the Office Automation Conference in Atlanta in February, departmental computing was a recurring theme. Although few exciting products were announced at the show, two major vendors, Digital Equipment Corp., Maynard, MA, and Data General Corp., Westboro, MA, introduced enhancements to their respective existing office systems, All-in-1 and Comprehensive Electronic Office (CEO). Both vendors announced software tailored to specific departments, combined with word processing and spreadsheets, with a user interface.

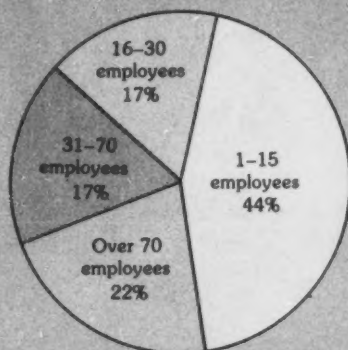
These vendors aren't the only ones trying to heighten organizations' interest in departmental computing. Mike

Hammer calls departmental computing "the next big step: the converging of office systems, personal computers, and distributed data processing." He has already christened the trend "DIS," for department information system. Hammer envisions a minicomputer that will support dumb terminals, act as a file server for intelligent workstations, and run software designed for specific departmental needs. DIS fills a niche, says Hammer. "Until now, individual departments were the corporate orphans. There are mainframes to support the corporation as a whole; there are workstations to support the individual employee; but there is nothing at the intermediate level to support departments." So no department will be an island, Hammer's dream of OA utopia also includes access to the corporate mainframe, which would act as a repository for databases shared by all departments.

Departmental computing's emphasis

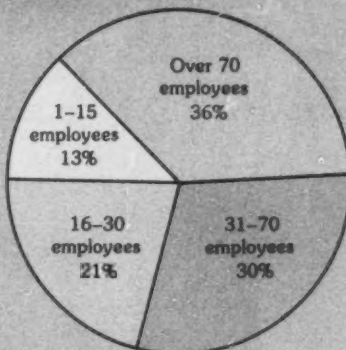
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OA AND MINIS



June 1984

Source: the Yankee Group



Year-end 1986

Departmental focus will become increasingly important as the size of work groups using integrated OA packages on minis grows.

(Continued from page 62)

is on a focused work group. It is geared to how most employees actually work—not in isolated cubicles, but in groups: sharing information, methods, and successes. Employees' allegiance to their department is often stronger than their loyalty to the corporation because of their close daily contact with the work group. Howard Anderson, managing director of the Yankee Group, Boston-based consultants and market researchers, views the department as a small business. "A corporation is an amalgam of profit centers, expense centers, responsibility centers, and research centers. Each has a specific job to do, and each has its criteria for success."

Departmental computing addresses those critical success factors by acknowledging that although each department has different needs, each may require some of the same tools as other departments. Office automation—word processing, spreadsheets, and electronic mail—is the common thread running through departments. However, each department uses office automation differently to fulfill its own goals. This departmental focus will be increasingly important as larger work groups draw their OA power from minicomputers. Last June, reports the Yankee Group, almost half

the groups using integrated OA packages on minis comprised one to 15 workers. By the end of next year, the consultancy predicts, the largest slice of the pie, 36 percent, will be composed of groups of over 70 employees.

One of the systems they may be sharing is the DEC All-in-1 system for sales and marketing, introduced at the Office Automation Conference. The first of DEC's occupation-specific packages for the office, All-in-1's software has three components: a database system, a field-reporting module, and a sales-lead management module. Each can be customized to address a department's specific reporting needs or work practices, a critical factor in any departmental computing package.

The database system retains data on account-prospect contacts and the account's background. The field-reporting module includes expense tracking to determine sales profitability, sales activity, call reporting, and sales forecasting. The sales-lead management module provides forms for listing and rerouting sales leads, and creating sales and marketing reports.

With these functions, a sales representative can use a workstation to perform more relevant tasks than, say, formatting a memo. Let's look at a day in the life of Joe Brown, super sales rep. With the reporting form, he re-

views a sales lead from the Acme Widget Co. While reviewing it, Joe attaches a previously written letter concerning Acme's need for small gizmos, his employer's product.

Joe sends his report to his boss, the sales manager. She checks the electronic files for more background information on Acme, and discovers that Acme's been having delivery problems with its current small-gizmo supplier. The manager notes this in the report, attaches a sales-forecast chart, and sends it back to Joe.

Does a sales and marketing group really work like this? According to 150 senior sales managers in the 46 Fortune 500 industrials DEC interviewed to help create the package, it does. The package will be available in June for a price ranging from \$6,600 to \$12,650, depending on the VAX system used.

For do-it-yourselfers, DEC offers the All-in-1 Integration Kit. The Integration Kit contains instructions for merging business applications with All-in-1 office tools. It will also be available in June, for \$150.

Data General has targeted legal departments by announcing two software packages that run under the CEO umbrella. Both packages are from independent software vendors. Lawfirm, from Standard Data Corp. (New York) tracks staff-time use, client billing, and maintains a legal database. Computer Power (New York) offers Status, which puts data in categories according to legal-library, litigation-support, and court-decisions files.

Data General has also introduced a souped-up minicomputer, the Eclipse MV/4000 DC, a competitor for the IBM System 36. The Eclipse comes with 3 Mbytes of memory, 15 Mbytes of tape cartridge, one 120-Mbyte Winchester disk, and one floppy drive; 14 Dasher workstations; two letter-quality printers; and a software package that includes CEO. Eclipse costs \$80,100, or \$5,725 per workstation.

Departmental computing is not the only answer to corporations' computing needs. Employees' personal computers and the corporate mainframes will continue to meet other business needs. Departmental computing may not be the OA utopia envisioned by some, but it's a step on the way. □